Those Cured of Hep C May Remain at High Risk of Fatty Liver

In a recent study, half of those cured of hepatitis C developed signs of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD).

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Even after achieving a cure for hepatitis C virus (HCV), individuals may remain at high risk for developing non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD, or fatty liver for short), Medscape reports.

Presenting their findings at the Annual Meeting of the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases in Washington, DC, researchers compared tests of liver health among 101 people before and after they were cured of hep C.

The average age of the participants was 60, and they had an average body mass index, or BMI, of 28. (A BMI greater than 25 and below 30 is considered overweight; a score above 30 is considered obese.) Ninety percent of them had diabetes.

The group saw a significant drop in ALT and AST liver enzymes and scores of liver fibrosis (scarring) severity.

After hep C treatment, 48 percent of the participants showed evidence of steatosis, or an abnormal shift of lipids (fats) in liver cells. Steatosis is an indicator of fatty liver disease. Six percent of this group had advanced liver fibrosis. Among those without steatosis, none had advanced fibrosis.

Individuals with steatosis did not experience a change in weight during the study.

Respective differences between those with and without steatosis included: BMI, 29 versus 26; glucose level, 108 versus 96; ALT level, 20 versus 15; CAP score (a measure of liver fat), 297 versus 214; and Fibroscan fibrosis score, 7.0 versus 5.3.

The researchers stressed that their findings do not suggest that hep C treatment actually causes fatty liver disease.

To read the Medscape article, click here (free registration with the site is required).

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